BARTON HILL TRIBE

by

Jenny Underwood

Back Home Pubs has no intent of harm or defamation of character to any person, living or dead. Reference to historical events may or may not have been researched. The stories are printed as they are told. Some may be folk tales. Although the editorial staff made every effort to avoid errors and correct them, some were inescapable.

Published by Back Home Pubs
P.O. Box 766
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554
jennygoog@gmail.com
417-203-0005

Creative Commons Deed

This is a human-readable summary of the full license below:

You are free to share -- to copy, distribute and transmit the work, and to remix -- to adapt the work for any purpose, even commercially.

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution -- You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work.)
- Share Alike -- If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same, similar or a compatable license.

With the understanding that:

- Waiver -- Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder
- Other rights - In no way are any of the following rights affected by the license:
- Your fair dealing or fair use rights
- The author's moral rights

Rights of persons may either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or private rights.

Notice -- For any resue or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do that is with a link to:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/

Books Published by Back Home Pubs (on Amazon)

Family & Children's books:

Destiny of the Mated Souls: Frank Charboneau (July 24, 2023)
Caregiving in the First Person for Kidney Patients (03-26-2016)
Courage and Comics (04-20-2019)
Collision Cooking (09-04-2017) Recipes and stories
Ghost Ship Rising: Kids Sailing West Coast (05-27-2017)
Princess of Umpapa: Eva Ford

Oregon County MO & other History books

The Startup of the Residence Center, MSU, West Plains, MO. (09-05-2023)
Railroad Ties (04 21, 2020)
Oregon County History: Trails to Springs, Caves, Geological Wonders and Camps. (04-30-2018)
OC History: Stories told at my Daddy's knees (04-22-2018)
OC History Train Wrecks and Plane Crashes (09-01-2017)
OC History the Eleven Point River, Ferries, Crossings, Mills (08-23-2016)
OC History: The Harpoles of Myrtle, Missouri (11-07-2016)
OC History: Memories of WW II (05-23-2016)
OC History: Thayer Class of 1963 (09-17-2016)
Historical Sketches of the Warm Fork Hill Country (08-28-2015)
OC History: The Irish Wilderness Yesterday and Today (04-28-2015)
OC History Book I: preserve Yesterday - Enrich Tomorrow (08-20-2014)
Oregon County Missouri History Short Version (06-10-2014)

Sci Fi Books by Michael Underwood

Marcus: Intergalactic Con Man (Sept. 2020 book 3 of a trilogy)
Shadow Killer and Front Runners (July 2020 book 3 of a trilogy)
Shadow Killer Dance with Death (Jun 10, 2017 book 2 of trilogy)
Shadow Killer (Aug 5, 2016 book 1 of trilogy)

Underwoods: Alice, Mammy and Larry chasing chickens

The Barton Hill Tribe

This is a story about some hooligan kids who grew up on Barton Hill in the middle of the Ozarks. Barton Hill was the tallest hill in the small town of Thayer, Missouri and owned by the Bartons from Alton. When World War 2 started to end, families wanted to put down roots somewhere safe. My Uncle Johnny and Aunt Sally had bought a farm in Myrtle, MO. near Jeff township. Uncle Johnny told of when electricity became possible, he couldn't think of any reason to have it in the house but he could use it in the barn. Then the war broke out and he enlisted in the Navy and Aunt Sally went to St. Louis to work in a munitions factory.

My Mammy and Pappy had moved up to help them out from Jonesboro, Arkansas but Mammy put her foot down and said no more farming and plowing and fixing up the ground. She told Pappy they were moving to town. My Dad, Shot Underwood, had come home from Hanford, Oregon where he worked on the silos to test the Atomic Bomb and wanted something more peaceful. He went to work for the Railroad after several years of civil engineering on concrete dams and structures. He wanted somewhere he could fish. My Mom was an expert seamstress having worked in Michigan in a factory.

My Dad and Mom bought five acres, my Mammy and Pappy bought an acre across the road, and my Uncle Boog and Aunt Janey bought lots down the street. And they proceeded to build houses as they knew how (Dad in construction, Boog in electric work, and Bud from Jonesboro from farming).

Underwood Family: Front, Red, Mammy, Pappy. Back: Granny, Shot, Boog

First Dad built a barn for us to live in. I was born about a year before in a house in Greentown in Thayer, Missouri. My brother Larry was born in Detroit, Michigan and Babe was born in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Dad used dynamite to make a hole for the basement. Then he would have my Mom and Pappy to build concrete blocks with rocks inside in several molds. He designed them very thick. Then the basement was built using those large hand made concrete blocks. It made a sturdy basement and neighbors would gather there if there was a tornado coming.

What I found out that my Dad was a civil engineer who helped build dams and concrete bridges and he worked for DuPont. When World War II broke out, he tried to enlist but they took him out of line and said they had a job for him to do.

They sent him to Washington to work on building the Atomic Bomb at Hanford, Oregon. He was needed for his expertise in building concrete silos necessary for testing the bomb. He was also known to have a photographic memory and the Hanford project isolated the different groups and had no written instructions, only verbal. He was there for about three years.

"The Hanford Site is a decommissioned nuclear production complex operated by the United States federal government on the Columbia River in Benton County in the U.S. state of Washington. It has also been known as Site W and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. Established in 1943 as part of the Manhattan Project, the site was home to the Hanford Engineer Works and B Reactor, the first full-scale plutonium production reactor in the world. Plutonium manufactured at the site was used in the first atomic bomb, which was tested in the Trinity

Underwoods: Babe, Jenny and Larry in front of house blocks

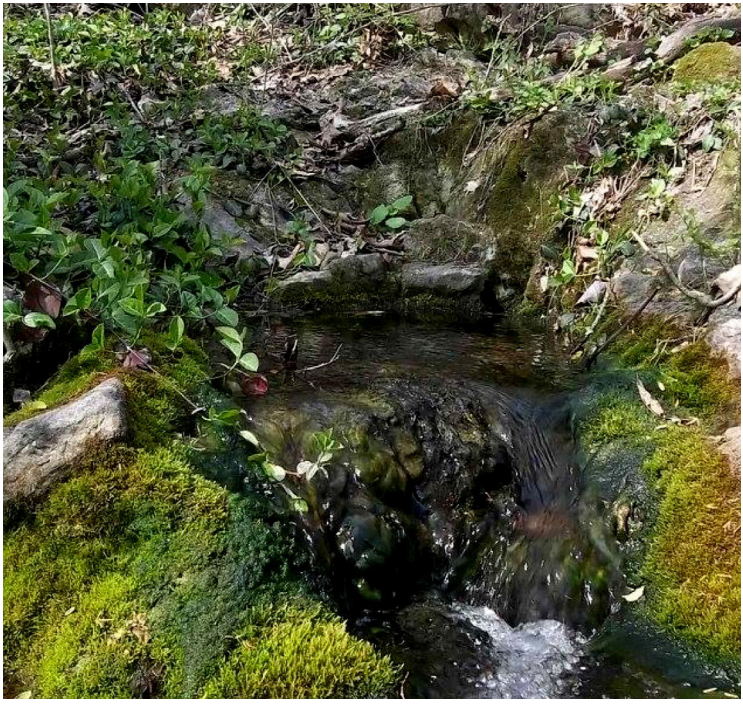
Underwoods: Larry & Jenny at block wall

nuclear test, and in the Fat Man bomb used in the bombing of Nagasaki."
Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanford_Site

When he came home, he built his basement as a bomb shelter. The people working on the bomb were sworn to secrecy and he nor my Mom never talked about it. But My Aunt Sally told me when I asked where he went during World War 2. She asked, "Don't you know? He helped build the Atomic bomb testing sites in Hanford, Oregon."

1950 Census: Elbert L. Underwood 40, Alice O. wife 32, Walter L. son 11, Kenneth L. son 8, Virginia L. daughter 4

Dad lived in the basement for several years before building the house above. One time Eva Ford and I decided to help clean the floors while he was out on a railroad run. We got a hose and some dishsoap and flooded the inside with a couple of inches of water. Then we got cleaning brushes and skated around on the the slick and watery floor. Needless to say, he was very angry. He had to pull out all the furniture to get it dried out and back to normal.



Frisco Springs on Two Mile Creek

Chicken House

Shot, Alice, Mammy, Pappy and Uncle Boog built a chicken house that would hold 5,000 chickens at a time that my Mom would run. Dad built an electric conveyor belt that would deliver feed to the chickens.

They would order chicks and raise the chickens until they were ready to be harvested. When the trucks came, the chickens had to be caught very fast or they would crash together and smother. The chickens had to be alive. I think the neighbors got free chickens anytime they wanted.

So all the boys and grownups on Barton Hill would come and catch the chickens very fast. Most still alive remember those days vividly. Dad would have home brew that he would pass out and Mom would have water and coffee. It was a crazy, fast job and everybody loved it.

When I was about four years old, I fell asleep on a feed sack when all the chaos was going on. Mom and Dad and my brothers went home and then they noticed I was missing. So they went searching and found me still asleep with the chickens.

One time there was a pack of wild dogs running around harassing the kids and chickens. My Dad was out on a railroad run so she got out the shotgun. She tied the dogs up with a rope. Then she loaded the gun to shoot them but she shot through the rope and they all got away!

Billy Haley remembers driving Dad's garden tractor to a sawmill at the bottom of the hill. They loaded up and brought sawdust back for the chicken house.

They stopped the chicken business when they went set one year. Mom went to work at the Dress Factory, one of the first ten employees.

Later on my Dad sold the chicken house to the Hiltons who went into chickens in a big way. While the Hiltons raised chickens in the chicken house, they always delivered a hen or two already plucked and cleaned to my Mammy for her Sunday dinner.

The Tribe

There was an oversupply of about twenty boys in the neighborhood more than girls. But we girls thought we were boys and played like boys, doing everything they did. Eva Ford, Donna Haley, Carolyn Bowers, and Jenny Underwood were born about the same year so there was a spate of female births (Hmmmm, wonder why?).

The tribe was a wild bunch that was completely unsupervised. We would roam all over Barton Hill and get into mischief. However, if we were seen doing wrong by any adult, our parents would know in a jiffy even before we got landline phones. We would play outside under the streetlights until 10:00 at night when they went off. Then we had to head home.

Jim and Alta Phipps had a young daughter that they kept in the yard. She would stand at the fence and say to me, "Singing (Jenny), would you come and play with me?"

And I would usually play with her a while.

Sports Fields

Our Dads came up with a plan for our play. Harvey Smith worked for the city so he got access to a bulldozer. The land at the lower part of the hill was owned by the railroad. So Harve, my Dad, John Haley, Ben Pohnert and others carved out two good sized fields for us to play in. The top field was used for track and had pole vaulting and other track sports because Bobby Haley excelled at track. The lower field was built for playing baseball and softball with the lanes defined. The girls would have softball games and the boys played baseball.

There was a path down the left side of the field that led to Frisco Springs and the railroad tracks. Sometimes hoboes from the trains would get off the trains and camp in the fields and use the water from the spring. They were nice and didn't bother anybody. Some of the women had chores for them would hang out a white dishtowel on the line. Then the hoboes would come up and do the chore for home cooked meals.

There was a hobo that we called Gabby Hayes that would come every spring and plow Mr. Ford's garden with a horse (or mule) and plow.

Tricksters

We were always playing tricks on people. One Halloween the boys turned over an outhouse, except Lottie Wells was using it at the time. They were in big trouble and had to rebuild the outhouse.

Mrs. Ellie Smith liked to pick blackberries in the woods and the boys would hide in the bushes and make sounds like a panther which would scare her away.

Our parents would warn us not to go play in Pohnert's pond and that is exactly where we would head to splash around. It was muddy and awful but we didn't care. We would build rafts out of wood or half a barrel and boat around the pond.

Barton Hill: Pohnert's Pond

When Harvey Smith worked for the city, Jimmy Smith would steal the keys from the take and the boys would cruise around.

Jimmy Smith bought an old 1946 Ford from Clyde Stewart. The first week he had it, some of the boys got in it and he took off out toward old iron bridge and got to sliding in the gravel and turned it over on one side. We just got out, pushed it over on it's wheels and went back home. The next day, Jimmy took it and sold it back to Clyde Stewart.

We had our own moonshiner, Lewis Wells, at the top of the hill. There was a steady stream of cars up the hill on Sundays when the liquor stores were closed. We had our own red light district on the back side of the hill that was frequented by locals.

This was in addition to the railroad hotels down Front Street that services the railroaders who spent the night there.

Fishing

Dad was a big fisherman and would fish on Warm Fork just below Barton Hill any chance he got. He had a big station wagon and would round up all the kids he could on Barton Hill to go to Lake Norfork. There wasn't any preparation, we were on our own. We'd grab a blanket and a few snacks at the grocery store and head out. The Moms didn't come. We slept on the ground and flat rocks. Dad fished at night and would catch enough fish to feed us.

The boys would challenge each other and see who could swim all the way across the lake and back. We girls were smarter and stayed in the shallow water.

Warm Fork

Dad took us fishing in Warm Fork as well. One day he took several of us and he went downstream of our swimming hole. We got the wild idea of building a dam in the narrowest part. So we lugged rocks over and had a good start on the dam. Dad noticed the water he was wading in was getting shallower. So he

Shot Underwood carrying fish bait

came up and saw what we had done. He was not impressed and made us tear it all down.

Dad built crawdad catchers that we would take down to Two Mile and catch crawdads. You had to put the basket behind them and then step in front of them. They would swim backwards very fast and we would scoop them up. We also put out minnow catchers where the minnows would go in and not be able to get back out.

One time Dad took me fishing in his canoe. As we were loading, he told me to put the minnow bucket in the boat. It had an inside part with holes and an outside part. I picked up the inside part and poured out the water. Later while we were fishing, Dad asked me to get a minnow out. I looked in and told him they were all dead. He asked what had happened to the water and I told him I had poured it out. He was so mad he turned the boat around and we went home.

On one fishing trip, while Dad was out fishing, my friend Eva and I were supposed to cook some potatoes. But we bought new potatoes and it took a long time to fry. Dad came back and had no fish so all we had to eat was the potatoes. After the potatoes were finally done, Eva reached in to grab one and I hit her hand. The potato skillet turned upside down in the dirt. So everybody was hungry and mad that we had nothing to eat.

Ever so often, Dad would fire up a big black pot in the backyard and cook the fish he had frozen from the trips. Mom and Mammy would bring the cornmeal mixture to make hush puppies and the side dishes.

When I was moving to California, Dad held a fish fry in the backyard and invited all the neighbors.

The Neighbors

There were several older generation people on the hill that were our surrogate grandparents. Mammy & Pappy (my grandies), Mr. & Mrs. Hines, Lucy & Gertie Childers, and Harve & Ella Smith. We were welcome in their homes anytime. And we made visits often. They would sit in their rocking chairs and listen to our stories, and mostly smile. However, I remember Pappy would threaten us with a razor strap when we got wild but he never used it.

I thought my job was to go visit the neighbors. I would start with Mr. & Mrs. Hines, go to the Boyers, then Lucy & Gertie, and Dolly Haley. Then I would come back up the hill stopped at Rosie Bradens, Ella Smiths, Aunt Janey & Uncle Boogs, the Bowers. Then I would take all the stories to my Mammy and report to her about what was going on in the neighborhood. When I became a Home Health Nurse I did the same thing, except I couldn't share any of the stories.

My Dad and Uncle Boog made home brew (same as moonshine) in a large crock barrel. They would hide it until it fermented. They hid a batch in the attic of Uncle Boog's house. My Aunt Janey was a very clean housekeeper and she cleaned and mopped one day. She went up the hill to visit Mammy and Pappy. It was a hot day. While she was gone, the crock barrel exploded and dripped through the ceiling all over the floor. When she came back, she was really made because her clean house had home brew dripping all over it and because she didn't approve of the home brew making at all.

Pappy had an old dog he called Old Blue. He was sing

“Old Blue, Old Blue, you Hounddog you!”

Here are the lyrics to his song Old Blue:

Well I had an old dog and his name was Blue
Yes, I had an old dog and his name was Blue
Well I had an old dog and his name was Blue
Bet ya five dollars he’s a good dog too
Old Blue chased a possum up a holler limb
Blue chased a possum up a holler limb
Blue chased a possum up a holler limb
The possum growled, Blue whined at him
Bye bye, Blue
You good dog you
Bye bye, Blue
You good dog you
When old Blue died, he died so hard
Shook the ground in my back yard
We lowered him down with a golden chain
And every link we called his name
Bye bye, Blue
You good dog you
Bye bye, Blue
You good dog you
My old Blue, he was a good old hound
You could hear him hollering miles around
When I get to Heaven first thing I’ll do
Is grab my horn and call for Blue
Bye bye, Blue
You good dog you
Bye bye, Blue
You good dog you

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbuQDqnMebk is a link to the song by the Byrds.

Mammy hated dogs so she said. But she would put left-over food out on her porch every day and the stray dogs would come and eat. I asked her why she did that if she hated them and she had no good answer. She asked for a gun from my Dad to shoot the wild dogs but he told her the same thing, to just quit feeding the dogs.

My brothers and I had a pair of twin dogs we called Mike and PeeDoomer, the Doomer twins. They were great rabbit hunting dogs.

Some of the neighbors had milk cows. Mammy and Pappy had a little barn no bigger than an outhouse and one old cow lived there. They would milk the cow and make butter from the milk.

Outhouses

When my Dad and Uncles built my Mammy and Pappy's house, they put a bathroom in. But in the meantime there was an outhouse out back. After the bathroom was functioning, we all used it but Pappy would not use it. He would still go out back to the outhouse.

So my Dad and uncles went out back and cut down a tree which mysteriously fell sideways and collapsed the outhouse. Then my Pappy had to start using the indoor plumbing.

Washing

The women used washing machines with hand crank rollers to get the water out after hand stirring them. They sometimes used big pots over a fire in the background with boiling water and used lye for soap.

In the 1920s there were over 1000 companies making washing machines. Before automated machines, clothes were typically washed in natural bodies of water, or in basins, with the assistance of a washboard or hand agitating device, like a washing plunger.

The washing process itself involved lifting the items from the cold soak and wringing or mangling each item before transferring them, with more soap flakes, into the copper for boiling. Items that remained soiled, even after an overnight soak, were rubbed on a scrubbing board before being transferred to the copper.

It was all done by hand and then the clothes were hung out to dry on a clothesline. It was an all day affair for the women.

Dad was experimenting with electricity. I remember when he hooked up an electric motor to run the bottom and the wringer. It helped the process so it wasn't so labor intensive. I understand the Amish still use this technique except they use a gas motor since they don't use electricity.

Here's an antique washing machine video on youtube: https://www.google.com/search?q=old+hand+run+washing+machine&oq=old+hand+run+washing+&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j33i160l3j33i299l2j33i22i29i30l4.9078j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-

-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:644887c7,vid:wHZg35cGCzo,st:0

Baths

We took weekly baths in a tub filled with water that was heated on the wood stoves. It was usually on Saturday night. And the dirtiest family member washed last!

We listened to the Grand Ole Opry on the radio while we bathed.

Wild Things

Often we would go into the woods and pick wild weeds and fruits. We loved to pick persimmons off the ground. And there were apple and pear trees. In the fall we would pick up walnuts and skin the green covering off.

We would pick greens from the gardens. And when the potatoes and turnips were ready, we would help dig them up. People had strawberries and blackberries to pick. Then we would eat them.

We would also pick polk leaves for polk (poke) salad.

The Trees

There were lots of trees to climb. Our parents told us not to climb the trees but we would scamper into the lush woods on Barton Hill and climb up to the lower limbs.

I remember we built hidden tree houses and played all around the trees. We also built boat contraptions out of wood and floated them in Pohnert's pond.

1958 Alice, Jenny, and friends floating in Warm fork

Two Mile Creek leading to Frisco Spring

Barton House: 1950 Census: Margret E. Barton 2, Lester E. Son 42

Braden House A: Sherman T. Braden 51, Rosalie wife 47, Blanche daugher 20.

Bradens House B: 1950 Census: David H. Braden 25, Vera wife 25, Larry D. son 2 Patricia A. daughter 1

Kerby House: 1950 Census: Kerby, Loyd 30, Evelyn wife 40

Haley House: 1950 Census: John E. Haley, 40, Dollie wife 39, Roberta daughter 16, Bobby Dean son 13, Claude E. son 11, Billy R. Son 8, Donna L. daughter 4

Phipps House: 1950 Census: James T. Phipps 50, Alta O. wife 36, Kathryn L. Newborn, Agnes Sloan stepdaugher 17
Boyer House: Bill & Nova, Grover, Howard, John

Underwood House A: 1950 Census: John M. Underwood 75, Eliza Jane wife 69

Underwood B: 1950 Census: John L. Underwood 27, Janey P wife 21, Leslie J. Son 2

Hines House: 1950 Census: Hines, Columbus M. 74,

Underwood C: Shot Underwood's house with fireplace built by Shot & Red Underwood

Bowers House: Charley & Louise Bowers, Calvin, Carolyn, Carlos & Red.

Underwood C House: 1950 Census: Elbert L. Underwood 40, Alice O wife 32, Walter L son 11, Kenneth L. son 8, Virginia L. daughter 4

Barton Hill Area above Pohnert's Pond

Barton Hill Tribe not in Census

Perry & Pearlene Bowers Ford, Frank, Eddie, Eva, Donald, Billy
Lucy & Gertie Childers
Ezra & Lola Manes, Charles, Annalee, Betty, Bill, Junior, Robert, Tom, Mary Ann, KK
Harve & Elva Smith, Eddie, Carolyn, Linda
Elmer & Rose Morris, Jack, Mack, Perry and Dean

1950 Census

Elbert L. Underwood 40, Alice O wife 32, Walter L son 11, Kenneth L. son 8, Virginia L. daughter 4
John L. Underwood 27, Janey P wife 21, Leslie J. Son 2
Calvin Kates 29 Emma J. daughter 30 Donald L 7 Danny P. grandson 4, gladys V. Granddaughter 7
Harvey Smith 54, Ella wife 50, Henry son 18
Sherman T. Braden 51, Rosalie wife 47, Blanche daughter 20
David H. Braden 25, Vera wife 25, Larry D. son 2 Patricia A. daughter 1
Margret E. Barton 2, Lester E. Son 42
Thomas E. Barton 43, Rosa wife 53
Beatrice Kester 32, Ronald D. son 12, Larry Wells son 7, Darrel V. son 2
Lottie Harper 37, Lewis D. Frisbee son 20
Hines, Columbus M. 74, Dora A. wife 69
John M. Underwood 75, Eliza Jane wife 69
James T. Phipps 50, Alta O. wife 36, Kathryn L. Newborn, Agnes Sloan stepdaugher 17
William M Braden 50, Dessie wife 45, Jackson, Helen A stepdaughter 19
Billy Ray Step grandson Newborn, Cecli stepson 12
Kerby, Loyd 30, Evelyn wife 40
John E. Haley, 40, Dollie wife 39, Roberta daughter 16, Bobby Dean son 13, Claude E. son 11, Billy R. Son 8, Donna L. daughter 4

Underwood D: Jenny, James & Michael Underwood Family House where track field was built by Baron Hill fathers for their kids to play in

2018 Underwood D, Jenny, James & Michael former Sport Field top

Larry & Babe Underwood playing on Barton Hill

2023 10 17 Barton Google map